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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Terry Goddard Applauds Court's Rejection of Bid to Limit "Coyote" Investigations

(Phoenix, Ariz. — Sept. 20, 2006) Attorney General Terry Goddard welcomed a decision by U.S. District Court Judge Stephen M. McNamee today that denied Western Union's attempt to restrict the scope of the Attorney General's financial investigations of major human smuggling organizations.

Western Union sought a temporary restraining order that would have seriously impeded the anti-smuggling efforts of a joint financial task force, composed of the Department of Public Safety, Phoenix Police Department and the Attorney General's Office. The task force has collected money transmitter data for several years as part of its investigations of coyote organizations operating in Arizona.

"This investigation is a powerful tool to disrupt human smuggling operations in our state," Goddard said. "Western Union's concerns are outweighed by the great public interest in prosecuting these crimes."

In his ruling, Judge McNamee said the financial task force operations were being conducted appropriately under comprehensive supervision by state courts. He also found that the Attorney General has legal jurisdiction over any organized criminal activity that has significant presence in Arizona.

Judge McNamee's decision is consistent with a ruling last week by Maricopa County Superior Court Judge James H. Keppel. That ruling said the Attorney General has statutory authority to request data from Western Union and that the information is relevant to the investigation of racketeering offenses by smugglers.

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